



Army Compatible Use Buffers

The Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program is an integral component of the Army's sustainability triple bottom-line: mission, environment and community. In recent years, Army installations are experiencing increasing encroachment from a variety of sources, including population growth, urban land use and environmental requirements. The ACUB program proactively addresses encroachment, which causes costly workarounds or compromises training realism. The program is a powerful tool that allows the military to contribute funds to the partner's purchase of easements or properties from willing landowners. These partnerships preserve high-value habitat and limit incompatible land use in the vicinity of military installations.

Title 10, Section 2684a, of the United States Code authorizes the Department of Defense to partner with nonfederal governments or private organizations to limit encroachment and protect habitat around installations. The Army implements this authority through the ACUB program, which is managed at Army Headquarters level by the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management according to priorities established by the office of the Director of Training. The Army Environmental Command provides technical assistance, facilitates ACUB proposal development and monitors program execution and advancement.



The IMCOM-Southeast Region consists of eight states from Kentucky to Florida, with headquarters at Fort McPherson, Georgia, and five approved ACUBs.



FORT BRAGG ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Bragg ACUB program began when Fort Bragg formed the North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership to protect military readiness and restore the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker's longleaf pine habitat. This initiative was the foundation for the legislation that authorizes the ACUB program today.

"The Army Compatible Use Buffer program has proven to be a powerful and effective management tool, providing a unique opportunity for our installations in the Southeast Region to work in partnership with environmental and conservation groups to achieve a common goal of sustainability by establishing buffer areas outside the installation boundaries. These partnerships have been successful in addressing incompatible land use, unconstrained development, and sensitive habitats on lands surrounding our installations, and ensuring the installation's land resources will continue to be able to support the training mission while curtailing encroachment. Our installations are the last bastions of outdoor training classrooms that provide us with world class warfighters, both now and into the future."

Davis D. Tindoll, Jr.,
Director, IMCOM-Southeast

LEADING CHANGE FOR INSTALLATION EXCELLENCE

Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Fort Bragg is one of the Army's premier power projection platforms and home to the Airborne and Special Operations Forces and U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Fort Bragg is located in the Sandhills region of North Carolina, recognized as one of the last remaining areas of longleaf pine forest in the Southeast. Longleaf pine forests provide the habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). A 1992 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) biological opinion imposed significant training restrictions on Fort Bragg as part of the RCW recovery requirements. In order to protect military readiness and the longleaf pine and wiregrass ecosystem, it was critical that Fort Bragg participate in the recovery of the RCW population. The RCW recovery requirements launched a regional partnership to bring stakeholders together to find a habitat management solution that extended beyond Fort Bragg and included critical habitat lands in private ownership.

More than 10,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat have been preserved through Fort Bragg's Sandhills partnership, with efforts underway to acquire additional conservation easements to form a cohesive ecosystem in the Sandhills area. Fort Bragg's ACUB contributed to early recovery of the RCW population in 2006. It has reduced training restrictions, protected critical areas on the installation's southern boundary, enhanced connectivity in the northeast training area, and buffered a new special forces training facility on Camp Mackall.



Photo by USFWS.

Fort Bragg Partners

- The Nature Conservancy
- Sandhills Area Land Trust
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Army Environmental Command
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- NC Division of Parks and Recreation
- Sandhills Ecological Institute
- NC Division of Forest Resources



FORT STEWART ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Stewart ACUB program and its partners established the Coastal Georgia Private Lands Initiative. The initiative will target up to 120,000 acres surrounding Fort Stewart for protection using conservation easements that limit incompatible land use and protect sensitive environments. The initiative will also create a conservation corridor between Hunter Army Airfield and Fort Stewart along the Ogeechee and Forest Rivers.

Fort Stewart, Georgia

Fort Stewart is the largest, most effective and efficient armor training base east of the Mississippi River, covering 280,000 acres, including parts of Liberty, Long, Tattnall, Evans, and Bryan counties in southeast Georgia. Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield support the 3rd Infantry Division and combine to be one of the Army's premier power projection platforms. In addition, Fort Stewart is home to three active duty Heavy Units of Action Maneuver Brigades, one Heavy Aviation Brigade, one Division Support Brigade, and one Division Fires Brigade.

The ACUB program is an essential part of Fort Stewart's strategy to meet its training requirements. Buffer areas on private land will retain the ability of assigned units to continue training along the perimeter and enable enhanced land management efforts to increase the Soldier carrying capacity of the existing ranges and mechanized maneuver areas.



Fort Stewart is located in the heart of the once vast longleaf pine ecosystem. Today, less than 3 million acres of longleaf forest remain, and less than 3 percent of this acreage is considered to be in relatively natural condition. Fort Stewart supports some of the best remaining examples of longleaf forest. The installation is home to six federally listed species and 20 state-listed or federal species of concern.

These considerations — compounded by development pressures associated with surrounding scenic areas and the city of Savannah — significantly affect training. Fort Stewart's conservation efforts and ACUB partnerships are directed toward sustaining Fort Stewart's training mission and the natural

resources in the vicinity of Fort Stewart by conserving land off the installation in order to maintain maximum flexibility in the use of training assets.

Fort Stewart Partner

- The Trust for Public Land



Photo by Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program.

FORT BENNING ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Benning ACUB program helps to channel land development away from critical portions of the installation boundary, protect endangered species habitat off post, and create opportunities for on post training expansion.

Fort Benning, Georgia

Fort Benning consists of 182,000 contiguous acres in Georgia and Alabama, and is an integral part of the Columbus, Georgia, metropolitan area. Fort Benning is the initial training area for the U.S. Army Infantry and the home of the U.S. Army Infantry School and Center, Noncommissioned Officer Academy, and Officer Candidate School. The primary military activities at Fort Benning include training entry-level Soldiers, providing the Army's premier facility for training the Infantry, conducting Airborne and Ranger training, hosting the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, and providing a power projection platform for rapid deployment. Fort Benning also provides training facilities for several U.S. Army Forces Command units. As part of the Base Realignment and Closure requirements, Fort Benning's population and training needs will increase with the arrival of the U.S. Army Armor School and Center and an additional brigade.



Fort Benning must protect its mission capability and full use of installation lands for training activities and supporting infrastructure. Encroachment threats and training restrictions have been manageable in the past, but increased growth and changes in land use present new encroachment challenges to Fort Benning's training mission.

Using a combination of conservation easements and conservation-focused land acquisitions by ACUB partners, The Nature Conservancy's initial ACUB acquisition creates up to 4,000 acres of buffer around the installation's perimeter.

The ACUB will prevent incompatible land use and establish corridors of forest land extending away from Fort Benning that are suitable for expansion of the RCW population off post. This also establishes a network of ecologically significant lands along the Fall Line extending east of Fort Benning in Marion and southern Talbot Counties in Georgia.

Fort Benning Partner

- The Nature Conservancy



Source: ACUB Proposal for Fort Benning.

FORT CAMPBELL ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Campbell ACUB program will avoid incompatible land uses located within the installation's designated high noise zones and aircraft over-flight areas, prevent light pollution from interfering with night operations, and protect key natural habitats and their associated flora and fauna.

Fort Campbell, Kentucky

Fort Campbell is located on both sides of the Kentucky-Tennessee border, approximately 50 miles northeast of Nashville, Tennessee. Fort Campbell's mission is to support training, mobilization, deployment, and redeployment of mission-ready forces. While Fort Campbell primarily supports the 101st Airborne Division and other assigned active component combat units, more than 50,000 military personnel train at Fort Campbell annually. Fort Campbell's units are among the first combat units to deploy to theater and have an operational tempo that is among the highest in the Army. To maintain the required level of mission-readiness, they need the ability to conduct realistic ground training and aviation operations on and around the installation — particularly at night.

Fort Campbell is concerned about increasing urbanization in the surrounding four-county metropolitan region. These areas experience significant over-flight activity and noise. Fort Campbell currently uses workarounds to avoid noise, dust, and smoke impacts on the community from weapons, vehicles, and aircraft.



Lights generated at night from residential and other developments can interfere with Fort Campbell's critical night operations training. Changes in land use and increased light pollution associated with the region's growth will result in the degradation of Fort Campbell's military training and deployment capabilities.

Fort Campbell's training areas contain approximately 4,000 acres of unique grassland (called barrens) that serve as transitional areas between forest and grasslands. Fort Campbell and the surrounding privately owned landscape has been identified as an area of exceptional ecological importance in the Interior Low Plateau Ecoregion.

Fort Campbell is also home to two threatened and endangered species: the Indiana and gray bats. Loss of habitat outside the fenceline could result in additional training restrictions on post. Through the ACUB program, Fort Campbell has the opportunity to help preserve the ecological integrity of the surrounding landscape so that the habitat inside the fenceline is part of a much larger network of protected lands that provide critical habitat for threatened and endangered species in the region.

The ACUB at Fort Campbell will establish protective buffers around the installation training area perimeter, preventing incompatible land uses from occurring within designated high-noise zones and aircraft over-flight areas. The Fort Campbell ACUB goal is to protect almost 80,000 acres over a 10-year period. The installation is actively pursuing the purchase of buffer properties which total approximately 560 acres.



Source: ACUB Proposal for Fort Campbell.

Fort Campbell Partners

- Land Trust for Tennessee
- Kentucky Department of Agriculture
- State of Tennessee
- Christian County



Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell.



Photo by Spc. Kelly K. McDowell.

FORT KNOX ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Knox ACUB partner will acquire conservation easements to prevent urbanization on approximately 35,000 acres of agricultural and undeveloped natural areas surrounding the installation perimeter. The ACUB will ensure Fort Knox's long-term ability to conduct realistic training and aviation operations.

Fort Knox, Kentucky

Fort Knox is located 30 miles south of Louisville, Kentucky. The installation encompasses 109,000 acres, of which approximately 63,000 acres are range and training areas and nearly 40,000 acres are impact areas. The mission at Fort Knox is to forge the Army's mounted combat force. Training activities include basic combat training, heavy force training and maneuver, aerial gunnery, and amphibious operations conducted in the training complex and eastern corridor battle space.

The training facilities are in use 365 days a year to support multiple exercises involving Soldiers assigned to Fort Knox, as well as active component Army units from other installations and Army Reserve, National Guard, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps units. Base Realignment and Closure requirements and the Global Defense Posture Realignment require Fort Knox to support new and challenging training requirements, which will include hosting units from Europe and South Korea, an Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Army Cadet Command and the combined Human Resources Command. Fort Knox training activities generate operational noise and vibrations that travel outside the installation boundaries.



Source: ACUB Proposal for Fort Knox.



Photo by Amy Serafin.

Fort Knox is home to the Indiana and gray bats, two federally listed species. Local growth is converting private farms and natural areas along Fort Knox's eastern and southern perimeters into residential and commercial land uses, resulting in potential restrictions to training, maneuvering, and deployment capabilities. Further environmental degradation and conversion of habitat outside the installation could result in increased protection requirements for habitat on post.



Photo by Mark Gumbert.

SOUTHEAST REGION

The first phase of the Fort Knox ACUB will target protection of about 8,000 acres around the Eastern Corridor Battle Space. The buffers will benefit the installation by avoiding incompatible land uses, limiting off post ambient lighting and other obstructions that could interfere with night training operations, and by protecting key natural habitats and associated flora and fauna.

Fort Knox Partner

- Lincoln Trail Area Development District



Photo by Scot Serafin.



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